High Street UK 2020

About

High Street UK 2020 was a knowledge exchange project partially funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and completed by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The project began in early 2014 and has now reported its findings.

The main aim of the High Street 2020 project was to channel existing academic knowledge relating to retail and high street change directly into individual locations, so they could develop sustainable high streets by 2020.

The 10 partner locations used within the study were Alsager, Altrincham, Ballymena, Barnsley, Bristol (Church Road, St George), Congleton, Holmfirth, Market Rasen, Morley, and Wrexham.

Birkenhead

Birkenhead Town Centre was assessed against the 25 priorities produced in the research with the findings summarised in the table below.

The 25 priorities have been divided into four different groups dependent on theme: customer experience, town centre management, retail mix and diversifying beyond retail, with vison and strategy the overarching theme.

A ‘Traffic Light’ rating was then applied to each priority:

- Red: Poor performance against priority
- Amber: Reasonable performance against priority
- Green: Strong performance against priority

Birkenhead Priorities

Priority	Considerations	Birkenhead Commentary	RAG Rating
Vision & Strategy	Having a common vision and some leadership. Do the High Street stakeholders collaborate? Is the vision incorporated in local plans?	Wirral Growth Company – Partnership between Wirral Council and Muse Development. Early phases of masterplan consultation for Birkenhead business district between Milton Pavement and Conway Park Station. Birkenhead Business Improvement District (BID) is a partnership between Wirral Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and Wirral Council, led by a private sector steering group, with the aim to enhance the overall experience for, shoppers, visitors and workers by making the BID area safer, secure, cleaner and more attractive Vision and Strategy through BRF which is currently being undertaken by AY. Emerging local plan coming soon …	A regeneration framework is currently being undertaken by AY which will provide the vison and strategy needed with priorities to address the issues.
Customer Experience			
Appearance	Improving the quality of the visual appearance, e.g. the public realm. How clean is the centre?	The town centre is clean and there was limited graffiti. The large number of vacant units make the centre look unappealing and some of the units on Milton Pavement are incredibly run down. There is limited green space, flora or fauna and there is a very 'concrete' look to the entire area. The external pedestrianised areas in this section feel somewhat enclosed and the hard landscaping would benefit from modernisation. The Market and its immediate surroundings are of a poor environmental quality, with imposing	Whilst relatively clean and tidy, the vacancy rate within the town centre is high and the environmental quality is low so this has a significant impact on the overall appearance.

		buildings which are showing signs of requiring upkeep and repair, a utilitarian / functional aesthetic and a lack of interaction with the street scene. The view of the town centre from A552 (Borough Road) is a large wall and staircase which is uninviting	
Experience	Considering the quality of the experience. Measuring levels of service quality and visitor satisfaction. What is the overall experience of the centre?	As discussed above, Birkenhead does manage to retain shopping trips from the Wirral population. The WYG asked how frequently people visited the high street. Of the 230 respondents, 11% said they visited daily, 52% said they visited once or twice a week, 28% said they visited once or twice a month. When asked what would encourage them to visit more often, 17% of respondents desire additional high street retailers, 15% said that more higher quality shops would encourage them to visit more frequently, 12% said update or refurbish the shopping area, 11% said less empty shops, 10% said more independent shops and 9% said a better market. When asked what they liked about the town centre, The most popular responses were that the town centre was close to home (20%), that there are a good range of non-food shops (8%), that the centre was perceived to be attractive (6%) and that the centre had a good layout (5%). After completing numerous site visits to Birkenhead Town Centre, the general clientele is the elderly and OAPs, parents with prams, and youth / school	Birkenhead does have a clientele who regularly visit the town centre. Site visits suggests the clientele does range from youths to elderly and therefore to retain these groups and attract others an inclusive environment that provides for all sectors of the population much be created.

		leavers (presumably attending the local college). However, there is no data that backs this up.	
Walking	The 'walkability' of the centre. Are linked trips between areas possible – or are the distances too great? Are there other obstacles that stop people walking?	The town centre is small and relatively walkable. The main shopping areas Grange Road and the Pavements are pedestrianised. However, the high street is very disconnected and confusing to walk around and there is limited sign posting for assistance. Responses to the Muse consultation made reference to the town centre being too spread out, disjointed and disconnected. In addition, the link to Conway Park and beyond to Hamilton Sq is limited. There is a significant hill from Borough Road to the Pyramid Centre which may be problematic for elderly or disabled.	The town centre has lots of potential for walkability but currently the layout is confusing and there are many barriers to pedestrians.
Attractiveness	The 'pulling power' of a centre. Can it attract people from a distance?	Birkenhead is successful at retaining much of the Wirral main-food market. 73% of main food trips in Birkenhead are retained in the town centre and it also draws trips from around Wirral. In contrast, for comparison goods shopping Birkenhead retains 41% of the trips. Liverpool City Centre, as the closest large major centre to Wirral is the most popular shopping destination outside of the district, attracting 10% of all shopping trips from the Wirral Study area, the Rock Retail Park attracts 15% of all Wirral shoppers and Cheshire Oaks attracts 3%.	Whilst Birkenhead does successfully manage to retain food and some comparison shopping within Birkenhead and across the Wirral it also suffers as a result of being in close proximity to Liverpool and several out-of-town retail parks.

		Retention levels for restaurant and cafes in Birkenhead are affected by the close proximity to Liverpool, which has a much larger offer. Retail Survey (2019): respondents were asked what aspects they liked about Birkenhead Town Centre. the most popular response was that the town centre was close to home (20%). To increase its pulling power it must be unique as it is unable to compete with the other, larger cities.	
Accessible	Ease of reach. How convenient is the centre to access? Is it accessible by a number of different means, e.g. car, public transport, cycling.	The town is well connected to the transport network. It is well connected to the road network with the A552 (Borough Road) which connects to the suburbs, M53 motorway and Queensway Tunnel. The bus station is located in the north of the town centre providing services to Liverpool and Wirral. There is also a coach terminal for further travel. Conway Park and Birkenhead Central are part of the Mersey Rail route. However, both are physically separated from the town centre by busy main roads and for Central a gyratory. Retail Study: Pedestrian access to the centre is considered to be hindered in part by the A552 which acts as a physical barrier to residents to the south. Conway Street is also a busy route which separates the northern part of the town centre from the Pyramid Shopping Centre. In the centre, pavements are walkable with the Pyramid Shopping Centre being pedestrianised allowing for the free flow of people. The streets in the northern area of the centre are narrower,	The town centre is very accessible by road, bus and rail. However, as highlighted in the WGC, each of the public transport nodes are very disconnected from each other. Walking connections within the town are also confusing. Therefore overall, whilst well connected outside the centre, improvements need to be made within the town centre.

		possibly due to accommodating more on street parking, but still considered accessible. Cycle parking is located in the centre. However, this was primarily concentrated in the Pyramid Shopping Centre. No dedicated cycle lanes or paths are located within the town centre. Connections to the river and docks also need to be improved	
Safety /Crime	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting. Perceptions of crime are usually higher than actual crime rates. Does the centre monitor these and how does it communicate results to stakeholders?	During the daytime Birkenhead Town Centre provides a generally safe environment. CCTV was noted in the centre at the Pyramid Shopping Centre, in the larger stores and at the junction of Grange Road, Oxton Road and Whetstone Lane. In contrast, at night, due to the lack of evening economy in the centre, the town centre feels unsafe and unwelcoming. A study of crime statistics in the town centre (ukcrimestats.com) shows that reports of five common crimes has slightly increased over the past two years. When combined the number of reports of anti-social behaviour, violent and sexual crime, shoplifting, criminal damage & arson and other theft have increased from 99 reported incidences in January 2017 to 102 incidences in January 2019. The Muse consultation highlighted that residents are concerned with anti-social behaviour and rough sleepers and as a result many felt unsafe in the town centre at night.	Birkenhead town centre is generally safe in the daytime but concerns during the evening which may impact the creation of an attractive evening economy.
Town Centre Management			

Management	Building capacity to get things done. Is there effective management – of the shopping centre(s) and town centre?	There a multiple management systems within the town centre. These include the owners of the Pyramids Shopping Centre and The Pavements, stakeholders on Grange Road, Wirral Borough Council and Wirral Chamber of Commerce and BID. Wirral BID have a good relationship with the council and many of the key stakeholders within the town centre and regular meetings between them all occur.	Whilst most of the stakeholders in the town centre have a good relationship and work well together, the large number of systems can prevent full cohesion.
Necessities	Ensuring basic facilities are present and maintained. Is there appropriate car-parking; amenities; general facilities, like places to sit down and toilets etc.?	Birkenhead town centre provides sufficient basic facilities and necessities. The main car parks in the centre are located at the Pyramids (485 spaces), The Grange (495 spaces) Europa Pools (197 spaces), Europa Square (150 spaces) and Hinson Street (90 spaces). On street parking (pay & display) is available along a number of roads in the town centre including Argyle Street, Market Street, and Oliver Street. However, the price of car parking was raised during the Muse consultation, with suggestions that it should be reduced or made free in the future. There are free public toilets located in the Pyramids shopping centre. Benches for seating are located along the pedestrianised Grange Road and a small seating area is located in St Werburghs Square.	The necessities are all provided for in the town centre.

		A food court, with a mixture of fast food chains, and a seating area is located in the Pyramids.	
Networks & Partnerships with Council	Presence of strong networks and effective formal or informal partnerships. Do stakeholders communicate and trust each other? Can the council facilitate action (not just lead it?)	Wirral council have relationships with key bodies in the council. For example there is council representation in the Wirral Growth Company and Birkenhead BID and the working towards the SRF. Wirral Council have a good relationship with many of these stakeholders and regular meetings occur between these groups.	Wirral Council have a good relationship with most of the key stakeholders in the town centre
Place Assurance	Getting the basics right. Does the centre offer a basic level of cleanliness, offer, customer service, is this consistent? Or do some operators, or parts of the offer, let this down?	As discussed in the necessities, Birkenhead does provide the basics with the town centre during the day time, there are multiple car parking, public toilets and services including banks and a post office.	Birkenhead does provide the basics within the town centre
Place Marketing	Communicating the offer. How does the centre market and promote itself? Do all stakeholders communicate a consistent image? How well does the centre orientate visitors and encourage flow – with signage and guides etc.	There are a several services and providers that promote Birkenhead Town Centre. • visitwirral.com – What do to in Birkenhead. • Google – Things to do in Birkenhead (although the top 5 attractions are located in Liverpool!) • Visit Wirral twitter • Birkenhead BID twitter • Wirral Growth Company twitter There should also be more emphasis on the cultural offering of Birkenhead outside of Hamilton Square including Birkenhead Priory, Williamson Art Gallery and Wirral Tramway and Transport	Wirral BID and Chamber of Commerce work hard to promote Birkenhead in local and regional press but there also needs to be the offering there to attract people to the town centre.

		Museum, plus Woodside Ferry view over to Liverpool. This cultural offering should be considered when improving the connectivity of the town centre.	
Barriers to Entry	Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested operators to enter the centre's/High Street's market. What is the location doing to make it easier for new businesses/service providers to come onto the High Street?	It is considered that the main barriers to retail and commercial leisure businesses opening premises in the town centre are: • Vacant units that are not in attractive locations for retailers • Vacant units that are not fit for purpose e.g. size, configuration or condition • Unrealistic asking rents • People choosing to visit Liverpool instead	There are increasing numbers of vacant units in the town centre which suggests there are increasing barriers to entry. Whilst footfall is sufficient in the town centre, it is decreasing and spend in the town centre is low. However, rents are relatively low, espeically compared
Store Development	The willingness for retailers/property owners to develop their stores. Are they willing to coordinate/cooperate in updating activities? Or do they act independently (or not at all!).	Many of the stores do not appear to be physically updated for many years. The signage and the outside of the buildings are worn and in need of some refurbishment. This indicates a general lack of investment in the high street.	There is a general lack of investment in the high street and this is reflected in the loss of some of the major retailers in the last couple of years.
Activity hours	Ensuring the centre is open when the catchment needs it. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?	Pyramid Shopping Centre Opening Hours: - Mon – Thurs: 09.00 – 17.30 - Fri – Sat: 09.00 – 18.00 ASDA Opening Hours: - Mon – Sat: 6.00 – 22.00 After completing numerous site visits to Birkenhead Town Centre, the general clientele is the elderly	Retail opening hours and a lack of bars and restaurants do not facilitate an

		and OAPs, parents with prams, and youth / school leavers (presumably attending the local college). There is a very limited number of restaurants/bars in retail core. In addition, there are several vacant pubs round Charing Cross, a couple of restaurants on Oxton Road and Grange Road West, but many takeaways. The retail study suggests that the retention levels and influence of restaurant facilities in Birkenhead are low for the size of the town. Activity in the town centre shopping area after normal shopping hours is very limited which is exacerbated by the closure of the Pyramid Shopping Centre car park closing at 17.45. 64% of those surveyed in Birkenhead visit restaurants and 45% visit pubs or bars.	evening economy – but is this what the catchment want?
Retail Mix			
Retailers & Services	Offering the right type and quantity of retailers and other service providers. What retailers and service providers (private/public) are represented?	The Town Centre is predominately retail with shops such as TK Maxx, New Look, Waterstones, Boots, Betfred, ASDA, Iceland and a variety of charity shops Service providers include: Travel Agents e.g. TUI and Hays, Post Office, Banks inc. Barclays and Santander and a pharmacy in core area. In the town centre periphery, services include pawn brokers, hair and beauty services and estate/letting agents	There is a good mix of retailers and services in the town centre, but they are of lower quality on the peripheral routes. Concern should be retaining these stores to help the high street thrive.
Diversity	A multi-functional centre. What attractions are there, apart from retail? What is the tenant mix and tenant variety?	The BIRS (2010) states “the town centre needs a more sustainable mix of uses to attract and retain users. The centre lack a quality hotel or leisure-	

		based offer to attract and retain overnight visitors" and not much has changed since this document. The centre relies heavily on retail and the inclusion of cafes e.g. Costa and Pound Café. There is currently very little evening economy. There are few restaurants or bars in the retail core and limited leisure provision. The retail core suffers due to the early closure of the shops (before 6pm) and the lack of other provision. In the wider town centre e.g. on Argyle St pubs and clubs are open until late, as does the Mecca Bingo and Gentings Casino but overall the evening economy is very poor.	The centre is heavily reliant on retail and needs to diversify to other uses.
Anchors	The presence of an anchor which drives footfall. This could be retail (like a department store) or could be a busy transport interchange or large employer. What brings most people to your town?	Since the closure of M&S it is hard to fully define the anchor store in Birkenhead town centre. The other major anchor store in the town centre - House of Fraser – has also recently closed Next, New Look, T J Hughes, T K Maxx, Primark and Wilko have also been considered as anchor tenants, although these do not have the same broad appeal of M&S. The Market is a draw to some local residents although it remains to be seen the impact of relocation.	Birkenhead has lost two of its major anchor retailers in the past year and the market is in decline – there needs to be a new anchor to ensure the survival of the high street.
Comparison/Convenience	The amount of comparison shopping opportunities compared to convenience (usually in percentage terms). Is this sustainable? Does it match needs of catchment?	Convenience goods are everyday items e.g. food, drink, confectionary, newspapers and magazines. Comparison goods are items obtained on a frequent basis including clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods. The retail offering in Birkenhead is 7% convenience shops and 25% comparison shops, both which are	Whilst below the national average there is a suitable and balanced mix of

		lower than the national average. The remaining 68% includes 24% vacant units, 13% retail, 19% leisure and 12% financial and business. The convenience goods retailers are approximately 1/3 national operators and 2/3 independents. National retailers include ASDA, Iceland and Heron Food whilst independent offering ranges from International Mini Market to vape stores. With the comparison goods retailers, the split between national chains and independents is approximately 50:50. The national retailers present were predominantly clothing / footwear and fashion retailers, along with discount retailers, jewellers, toiletries suppliers and card stores. The independent offering also included clothing retailers, however this was of a notably smaller amount and proportion when compared to that of nationals. It also included a more diverse range such as furniture shops, music / media shops, second hand and discount goods, florists and gift stores.	shop types and a mix of independent and national chains. The national chains are predominately found in the
Chain vs Independent	Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street. Is this suitably balanced?	There are 102 units in the town centre that are occupied by national multiple operators, which represents 21% of the overall number of units in the town centre. The majority (69%) of units in the town centre are occupied by independent retailers. In terms of distribution, it was generally observed that national operators were confined to the Pyramid Shopping Centre and independent retailers were located in the periphery of the	There is a suitably balanced mix of chain and independent stores.

		centre, such as along Grange Road West, Oxton Road and the area north of Conway Street. The majority of the national operators fell into the comparison sub-category. The presence of independent stores was highlighted in the Muse consultation as a reason to like the town centre.	
Merchandise	Meeting the needs of the catchment. What is the range and quality of goods on offer?	As stated in point above, there is a suitable mix of retailers in the town centre although some of it is of low quality. There is a lack of high end shops in the town centre which has been highlighted by consumers in the town centre when asked how they would like the town centre to change.	There is a sufficent mix of retailers but a lack of high end stores
Diversifying Beyond Retail			
Entertainment and Leisure	An entertainment and leisure offer. What is it? Is it attractive to various segments of the catchment?	Within the retail core there is limited leisure provision and the proportion of units in the town centre in leisure service use (19%) is below the national average (24%). A VUE cinema and public swimming baths are located in the north, by Conway Park Station. Wirral Youth Zone is located off Claughton Road and Mecca Bingo is located adjacent to the market. There are a range of cafes in the town centre e.g. Costa, Café Nero but there is a limited provision of restaurants, pubs or bars. In addition these tend to be located on the peripheral routes of Oxton Road and Grange Road West.	There is limited leisure provision in the town centre which is below the national average. To diversify this must change.

		The retail study found that general participation in leisure activities in Birkenhead was lower than the rest of Wirral. In addition, when asked what leisure facilities they would like to see more of, within commercial leisure an increase in restaurants was the most popular suggestion with children's facilities also considered a priority. However, most of those surveyed were very satisfied with the leisure provision in Birkenhead with 54% answering 'none' to what leisure provision they would like more of. A cultural hub was highlighted by the Muse consultation as a good idea to promote social inclusion. It was also suggested that there needs to be more leisure facilities for families, children and teenagers.	
Recreational Space	The amount and quality of recreational areas and public space/open space. Is there places that are uncommodified? Where people can enjoy spending time without spending money?	There is very limited recreational space in the retail core. St Werburgh's Square is the only public space in the main retail core which has the intended use for people to 'sit' In wider Birkenhead recreational space is found in Birkenhead Park, Bidston Moss, and Hamilton Square has pedestrianised and open green space. However, the connections between these areas and the town centre need to be improved to best utilise the areas. Those responding to the Muse consultation suggested the need of more open space, greenery and seating in the town centre.	Very limited within the retail core and there are poor connections to the space in the wider area.

		It was also noted that there is no outdoor event space which could be used for seasonal markets, ice rinks or music events.	
Liveable	The resident population or potential for residential in the centre. Does the centre offer the services/environment that residents need? Doctors, schools etc.	There is currently very limited residential offering within the town centre core. A residential community is located to the south of A552 (Borough Road) but this is effectively cut off from the retail core by the A-road with very few crossing points. Housing is also located to the immediate north west of the town centre. There is provision of multiple primary schools to the north and south of the retail core. Whetstone Medical Centre (0.3 miles south) is located to the south of Borough Road and St Catherine's Health Centre (1 mile south) is a community hospital in Tranmere. It provides a doctor's surgery as well as limited hospital services. The closest walk in centre is in Wallasey (2.5 miles north) and the closest A&E is in Upton (4 miles east).	There is currently limited residential developments in the retail core (although a planning application is currently under review) so difficult to assess. Limited provision of basic amenities within the retail core but offering in the surrounding area.
Adaptability	The flexibility of the space/property in a centre. Are there inflexible and outdated units that are unlikely to be re-let or re-purposed.	Within the retail core, the retail units are mainly single units built between 1970s and 1990s. There is limited adaptability to these units without permanently changing the configuration of the units. Some of the units on Milton Pavement are in a very poor state and therefore are unlikely to be able to be re-let without large scale refurbishment. Options to move the market have involved moving into a retail unit such as M&S, which could make the space less flexible.	Most of the units in the town centre are small and require modernisation. Any improvements are likely to be costly and consideration needs to be given to how reconfiguration will impact uses.

Place Marketing Snapshot:

Birkenhead - Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Birkenhead ▾

Birkenhead is a town in the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral, Merseyside, England. Historically until 1974 in Cheshire, it is on the Wirral Peninsula, along the west ...

Post town: mw-parser-output span.allcaps, BIR... **Metropolitan borough**: Wirral

Area: 25.18 km^2 (9.72 sq mi) **Region**: North West

Birkenhead (UK Parliament ... · Category:Birkenhead · Birkenhead Priory

You've visited this page many times. Last visit: 13/11/19

Top things to do in Birkenhead

Royal Albert Dock Liverpool

Leisure complex in old Victorian docks

The Beatles Story

Detailed celebration of the Fab Four

Museum of Liverpool

Diverse displays telling history of city

Merseyside Maritime Museum

Free exhibitions on seafaring heritage

Birkenhead travel guide